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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5849th meeting

Tuesday, 11 March 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2008/98)

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08-26748 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2008/98)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mulet to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/98, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mulet: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on Darfur. I will begin with an update on the security and humanitarian situation, in particular the recent violence in West Darfur and its consequences for civilians, as well as on the actions of the African Union-United Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), given its mandated responsibilities and capacity constraints. I will then provide a detailed overview of UNAMID's deployment status and priorities.

As the Council is aware, following the offensive carried out by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Sirba and Seleia, north of El Geneina, West Darfur, in late December 2007 and early January 2008, the Government of the Sudan launched a large-scale ground and air military campaign aimed at reasserting Government control over those towns, which JEM had labelled "liberated lands", as well as over the JEM and Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) stronghold area of Jebel Moon. The tactics used by the Government included joint Sudanese Armed Forces/Janjaweed militia attacks supported by fighter jets, helicopter gunships and Antonov aircraft. Humanitarian agencies were extremely concerned by the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian assets, in particular clinics and water points in Jebel Moon. The tactics used by the Government included joint Sudanese Armed Forces/Janjaweed militia attacks supported by fighter jets, helicopter gunships and Antonov aircraft. Humanitarian agencies were extremely concerned by the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian assets, in particular clinics and water points in Jebel Moon.

A massive Government attack on Abu Suruj, Sirba and Seleia on 8 February, when we last briefed the Council, was later shown to have caused numerous deaths and tens of thousands of new displacements. On 18 February, the Government and Janjaweed militia attacked JEM and SLA-Abdul Wahid positions in Aro Sharow and the Kandare and Kurlungo areas of Jebel Moon, as well as the Wahid stronghold of Deribat, further to the east in Jebel Marra. Fighting between Government forces and JEM and SLA-Wahid rebels, supported by Chad, continued in Jebel Moon on 22 and 23 February, as well as 26 and 27 February. As a result of the violence, at least 70 civilians have been killed, 13,000 have sought refuge in Chad, and 20,000 are said to be trapped by the violence in Jebel Moon.

Joint Special Representative Adada has been active in engaging the Government on the issue and has visited the areas affected by the crisis. Together with the Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, he met with senior defence and humanitarian Government officials in Khartoum on 23 February and urged the Government to replace military personnel with national police in the area of Seleia; suspend hostilities through a ceasefire, allowing for a period of tranquillity that would permit civilians to move to safety in that area; and allow humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to civilians.

A 10-day period of relative tranquillity indeed followed those discussions between UNAMID and the Government, during which UNAMID sent daily

military and police patrols from Kulbus and El Geneina to the northern corridor to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As a result of that assistance, 90 per cent of the population of Sirba and Abu Suruj have returned. In Seleia, however, which suffered large-scale destruction, only 1,500 of the 20,000 civilians have returned. The population's reluctance to return to the town is reportedly due to the presence of large numbers of Government troops in the area. UNAMID believes that a company of soldiers from the Sudanese Armed Forces is present within Seleia, while a brigade — or about 2,400 soldiers — is in the area surrounding the town. Additionally, there are reports of looting and harassment of women by Sudanese Armed Forces and Government-allied militia in and around Seleia.

On 5 March, the Government indicated to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and UNAMID that it will send 500 central police to Seleia. That will be a positive development. The area of Jebel Moon, however, remains inaccessible. Government air strikes in Jebel Moon resumed on 9 March, and we are extremely concerned about the safety of 20,000 civilians who continue to be trapped in the area. In addition, there are indications that a retaliation by JEM may take place once it has had time to regroup.

During February, there was also a marked upsurge in violence in South Darfur. On 29 February, in two separate incidents, Government patrols were ambushed at Amr Gedid and Domaya, north of Nyala, by SLA-Unity and Arab militia respectively, and seven Government soldiers were reportedly killed and 22 injured in the attacks. On 1 March, a commercial convoy of 43 trucks and fuel tankers accompanied by a Government police escort was ambushed by SLA-Unity forces near Gabat Hamada, 85 kilometres north of Nyala. Six Government soldiers were reportedly killed and six wounded in the attack, and three tankers were stolen.

There were also security incidents involving inter-tribal fighting in both North and South Darfur. On 27 February, a group of approximately 160 men on horses and camels from the Rizeigat and Salamat tribes attacked Habaniya tribesmen in the town of El Sunita in South Darfur and killed 21 people. On 28 February, the Habaniya retaliated and killed 60 people in the area east of Gereida. In North Darfur, fighting between the Zaghawa and Beni Hussein tribes is reported to have displaced approximately 300 people during the reporting period.

In another disturbing development, on 3 March a French special forces officer of the European Union-led peacekeeping force was killed and another was wounded by Sudanese Armed Forces fire when they accidentally crossed into the Sudan. It is clear that the tensions between Chad and the Sudan and fighting carried out by proxy rebel forces have the potential to regionalize the crisis and derail international peace efforts on both sides of the border. The normalization of relations between the two countries is essential if international efforts to restore stability are to succeed. Tomorrow's summit in Dakar between Presidents Bashir and Déby at the invitation of President Wade is an important opportunity in that regard.

In response to the Government's actions in West Darfur, on 5 March the Secretary-General called Foreign Minister Deng Alor and made clear that, notwithstanding arguments of the Government of the Sudan that its actions are in response to the military engagement of rebel movements, civilian suffering of that scale is unacceptable and is sending signals to the international community that the Government has no regard for the lives of its citizens or for humanitarian law. The Secretary-General also stressed that those actions were undermining prospects for political negotiations and posed fundamental challenges to the ability of UNAMID to fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Eliasson has also talked to senior JEM and SLA-Abdul Wahid representatives and asked them to cease all hostilities. JEM said it would be unwilling to stop fighting unless a ceasefire were part of a broader political framework and discussions on security arrangements. That is an extremely problematic position when we consider the civilian suffering that has been caused by the fighting.

While the Government has the primary responsibility to protect civilians, UNAMID has a strong complementary mandate in that regard that it will not be in a position to comprehensively implement until a critical mass of properly trained and equipped new troops and enabling assets are in place. Within its current capabilities, UNAMID vehicle patrols have been mounted into the area south of Jebel Moon from both Kulbus and El Geneina. Those limited operations will continue as long as the situation in the area remains tense. The longer-term intent is to reinforce

Kulbus with additional troops so as to permit the continuous deployment from there to Seleia of at least a platoon. UNAMID police will also increase their presence in Seleia as soon as appropriate facilities are built. It will take some weeks, however, to establish camp, resupply and communications facilities for a sustained presence in Seleia, since no provisions have heretofore been made for basing troops there.

The Force Commander has also increased his contacts with the parties in order for the Mission to better assess their movements, intent and capabilities, while also instilling within them the confidence that UNAMID is an impartial actor in Darfur. The Mission continues to work with the Government, JEM and SLA-Abdul Wahid to ensure that the civilians trapped by the fighting are given safe passage to a secure location.

The fighting in Darfur makes clear that preparing for political negotiations does not seem to be a priority for either the Government or rebel movements. The implications are dire. On the one hand, negotiations are required to bring this crisis to an end. But with the Government intent on military action and the rebels either fighting or fragmenting, it is difficult to see an opening for political negotiations. On the other hand, a peacekeeping operation alone cannot bring security to Darfur.

Nevertheless, we are pressing forward to implement the Council's resolutions and to do all we can to improve the situation. At the same time, it is important to recognize that UNAMID has a long way to go and is far from having a meaningful presence on the ground. We continue to face difficulties in our efforts to reinforce the Mission, in security, in consistent levels of cooperation with the Government, logistical constraints and force shortfalls.

As at 10 March, UNAMID's total strength was 9,178 uniformed personnel, including 7,441 military personnel, 1,597 police officers and one formed police unit. A total of 1,312 civilians were deployed as at that date. The majority of the military and police personnel currently in the Mission was inherited from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS). In addition, the 135-person advance party of the Chinese engineer company is now permanently based in the Nyala supercamp, where it continues its work to develop the infrastructure for the Mission in that town. The unit's main body of 175 troops is scheduled to complete its deployment to Nyala by early April. The formed police unit from Bangladesh is co-located with the Chinese engineering unit in Nyala and is patrolling on a daily basis.

During the coming weeks, we look forward to the deployment of a number of additional enabling units and infantry to UNAMID, and the beginning of scheduled rotations of current troops. The Egyptian transport unit is scheduled to arrive in Nyala this Sunday, 16 March, and the Egyptian engineer unit is scheduled to arrive in El Geneina on 24 March. The Nigerian level-II hospital is scheduled to arrive in El Geneina during the first week of April.

With respect to the deployment of additional infantry units to UNAMID, the Egyptian battalion is expected to deploy its lead company group to Nyala on 19 March, with the remainder of the battalion completing its deployment on 15 April. The Ethiopian battalion's lead company group is scheduled to arrive in El Fasher on 7 April. The remainder of the Ethiopian battalion will complete its deployment on 15 May.

As agreed with the Government of the Sudan, preparations for the deployment of the Thai infantry battalion and the Nepalese force and sector reserve units continue, and their deployments are scheduled to take place once the Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions have arrived in Darfur. The remaining five African infantry battalions are not expected to deploy before mid-2008, when their major equipment procurement and initial training programmes have been completed.

The timely deployment of those battalions will be linked to donor countries' efforts to support troop contributors with equipment, training and self-sustainment capability. We are grateful to the United States and Canada for their initiative to establish a group of friends of UNAMID, which will work with troop-contributing countries to accelerate the readiness of their troops to deploy. The priority for this support is to increase the capacity of the existing ex-AMIS troops and their rotations, which are due to deploy in the next three to four months. It is absolutely critical that the incoming troops have self-sustaining capability and equipment to enable them to patrol and effectively carry out their operations. As Force Commander Agwai has said over and over, without self-sustainment, incoming troops are a burden to the Mission and become part of the problem, not the solution.

Preparations are also under way for the arrival of the next three formed police units, from Nepal, Indonesia and Egypt. The major equipment of the Nepalese formed police unit arrived in Port Sudan on 18 February. The Mission is working with Sudanese authorities to ensure the speedy release and transportation of that equipment.

The Council will recall that the transportation of the Chinese engineering and Bangladeshi formed police unit equipment took seven weeks in November and December last year, during which the units were not operational. We cannot afford a repeat of those delays, and we look to the Government of the Sudan to facilitate the administrative and security arrangements for the earliest possible arrival of UNAMID cargo in the area of operations.

With the exception of Ethiopia's pledge of four light tactical helicopters, credible offers for utility helicopters and the remainder of the light tactical helicopters, aerial reconnaissance aircraft and logistics and transport units remain outstanding. Those mission-critical gaps make the job of deploying UNAMID extremely difficult. We urge the Council once again to support our efforts to find and deploy those assets to the Mission as soon as possible.

In the short term, the ability of UNAMID to absorb new units is constrained by its limited logistical capacity and the lack of mission enablers for the establishment of transit accommodations. But it ultimately depends on the level of self-sustainment of the incoming units.

The force is also facing challenges in its transition from the AMIS to the UNAMID logistics supply system. Similarly, the mission is further hampered by ageing equipment inherited from AMIS. Until the process of AMIS asset liquidation is complete, communication equipment and vehicles transferred from AMIS cannot be processed for United Nations registration, licensing and maintenance. As a result, many of the computers, radios and vehicles used by former AMIS military and police personnel are incompatible with United Nations networks and standards. Given the implications for the effectiveness of the force's command and control, as well as for its morale, the United Nations is working with the AMIS liquidation team to complete that work as soon as possible.

In authorizing the deployment of UNAMID, the Security Council committed significant resources as part of its overall effort to contribute to a solution to the crisis in Darfur. That investment is at risk due to a number of well-known challenges. Foremost among them are the security situation and the determination of some parties to continue to pursue their objectives through military means, with such a devastating impact on the civilian population.

At the same time, if we are to reconfigure UNAMID into a robust, credible and proactive peacekeeping presence, we must redouble our efforts to work with troop- and police-contributing countries to address the practical challenges faced by the Mission, such as gaps in force composition and the readiness of incoming troops.

But UNAMID cannot be a substitute for political engagement. UNAMID is one element of an international strategy. When fully deployed, the Mission will address a broad range of responsibilities, the protection of civilians being foremost among them. But it will not be a tool for addressing the causes of the conflict. The vitality of the political process is critical to real lasting progress.

According to Special Envoys Eliasson and Salim, the situation on the political front is not promising. With the movements having made little progress in terms of unifying their positions and agreeing on a negotiating team, there is little prospect of beginning substantive negotiations with the parties any time soon. In particular, the two most significant political and military factions — the JEM-Khalil Ibrahim and the Sudan Liberation Movement Abdul Wahid faction — remain outside the process.

In addition to the Government's clear commitment to a military solution, there is also disagreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the National Congress Party on the Darfur question. The lack of a clear Darfur strategy in the Government of National Unity itself, including regarding the role of Minni Minnawi, does not indicate seriousness about making peace.

On 17 and 18 March, the United Nations and African Union envoys will convene informal consultations with regional and international partners at Geneva to take stock of the situation and hopefully to reach an understanding on the way forward.

Meanwhile, the continued hostilities in Darfur serve as a stark reminder that urgent international engagement and concrete action are necessary to encourage and pressure the parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons and commit themselves to the path of dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Mulet for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.